



**The Sunday of the Holy and God-bearing Fathers at Nicea.**

The heresiarch Arius was a Libyan by race and a protopresbyter of the Church of Alexandria. In 315, he began to blaspheme against the Son and Word of God, saying that He is not true God, consubstantial with the Father, but is rather a work and creation, alien to the essence and glory of the Father, and that there was a time when He was not. His frightful blasphemy shook the faithful of Alexandria. Alexander, his Archbishop, after trying in vain to correct him through admonitions, cut him off from communion and finally in a local council deposed him in the year 321. Yet neither did the blasphemer wish to be corrected, nor did he cease sowing the deadly tares of his heretical teachings; but writing to the bishops of other cities, Arius and his followers requested that his doctrine be examined, and that if it were unsound, that the correct teaching be declared unto him. By this means, his heresy became universally known and won many supporters, so that the whole Church was soon in an uproar.

Therefore, moved by divine zeal, the first Christian Sovereign, Saint Constantine the Great, the Equal to the Apostles, summoned the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea, a city of Bithynia. It was there that the shepherds

and teachers of the Church of Christ gathered from all regions in the year 325. All of them, with one mouth and one voice, declared that the Son and Word of God is one in essence with the Father, true God of True God, and they composed the holy symbol of Faith up to the seventh article (since the remainder, beginning with, "And in the Holy Spirit," was completed by the Second Ecumenical Council). Thus they anathematized the impious Arius of evil belief and those of like mind with him, and cut them off from the body of the faithful.

Therefore, recognizing the divine Fathers as heralds of the Faith after the divine Apostles, the Church of Christ has appointed this present Sunday for their annual commemoration, in thanksgiving and unto the glory of God, unto their praise and honour, and unto the strengthening of the true faith.

*Dismissal Hymn of the Holy Fathers. Plagal of Fourth Tone*

**M**OST glorified art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast established our Fathers as luminous stars upon the earth, and through them didst guide us all to the true Faith. O Most Merciful One, glory be to Thee.

*Dismissal Hymn of the Ascension*

**T**HOU hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, and gladdened Thy disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit; and they were assured by the blessing that Thou art the Son of God and Redeemer of the world.

*Kontakion of the Holy Fathers. Plagal of Fourth Tone*

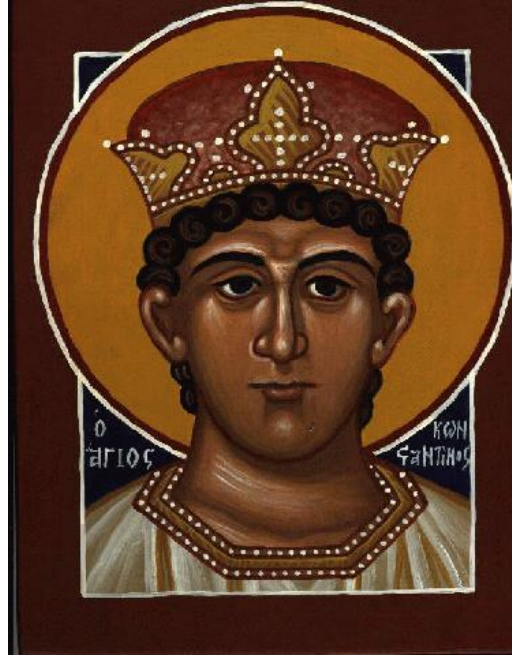
**T**HE preaching of the Apostles and the doctrine of the Fathers confirmed the one Faith in the Church. And wearing the garment of truth woven from the theology on high, she rightly divideth and glorifieth the great mystery of piety.

*Kontakion of the Ascension*

**W**HEN Thou hadst fulfilled Thy dispensation for our sakes, uniting things on earth with the Heavens, Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, departing not hence, but remaining inseparable from us and crying unto them that love Thee: I am with you, and no one can be against you.

The Apodosis of the Feast of the Holy Fathers takes place at Vespers of this same Sunday.

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## SAINT CONSTANTINE THE GREAT EQUAL TO THE APOSTLES.

### The Making of a Christian Emperor Saint Constantine the Great, Equal to the Apostles

By Father Panagiotes Carras

*"By this, conquer."*

(An excerpt from the concluding remarks:)

"In his beautiful life, we see how God put this rugged soldier through the fire, took this rough diamond and cut and polished it until [ , by] the end of his life, it glittered like fire. In this amazing Saint who is called Equal to the Apostles, we see the positive response to the great outpouring of grace upon him. He was a co-worker with God, he was God's man.

Unhappily, most modern books in English on Saint Constantine portray him as a villain, a shrewd politician, and a conniver. Here we once more recall the story of the demons that were thwarted by the Cross. Diocletian, seeing this

sign, became infuriated at the Christians and instituted a great persecution against them. But the young Constantine saw the truth.

May the light that enlightened Saint Constantine to see the truth always be with us and protect us from the darkness that would conceal our Lord from us. May we always follow in the footsteps of Saint Constantine rather than those who follow the demons. May each one of us respond as Saint Constantine did to the great mystery of the Cross and become co-workers with God, men and women of God. Finally, let us each take up our own cross, that symbol of immortality and trophy of victory over death, and by it let us conquer.”

THE TRUE VINE

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## THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA

Selected Hymns from  
THE MENAION

### OIKOS

**I**N the lofty preaching of the Church of God, let us hearken as she crieth: He that thirsteth, let him come and drink. The cup which I bear is the cup of wisdom. Its drink have I mixed with the word of truth. I pour forth the water, not of contention, but of confession. As Israel now doth drink thereof, it beholdeth God, Who saith: See, see, that I am He, and have not changed. I am God, I am first, and I am hereafter, and besides Me there is none other. Hence they that partake shall be filled, and shall praise the great mystery of piety.

*Then the Synaxarion of the Menaion, and the following:*

On this day, the seventh Sunday of Pascha, we celebrate the First Œcumenical Council, of the three hundred and eighteen God-bearing Fathers, which took place in Nicea.

### Verses

O ye light-bearing stars of the spiritual firmament,  
Enlighten my mind with your rays.

### Verses against Arius

Calling the Son a stranger to the Father's essence,  
Arius proved to be a stranger to God's glory.

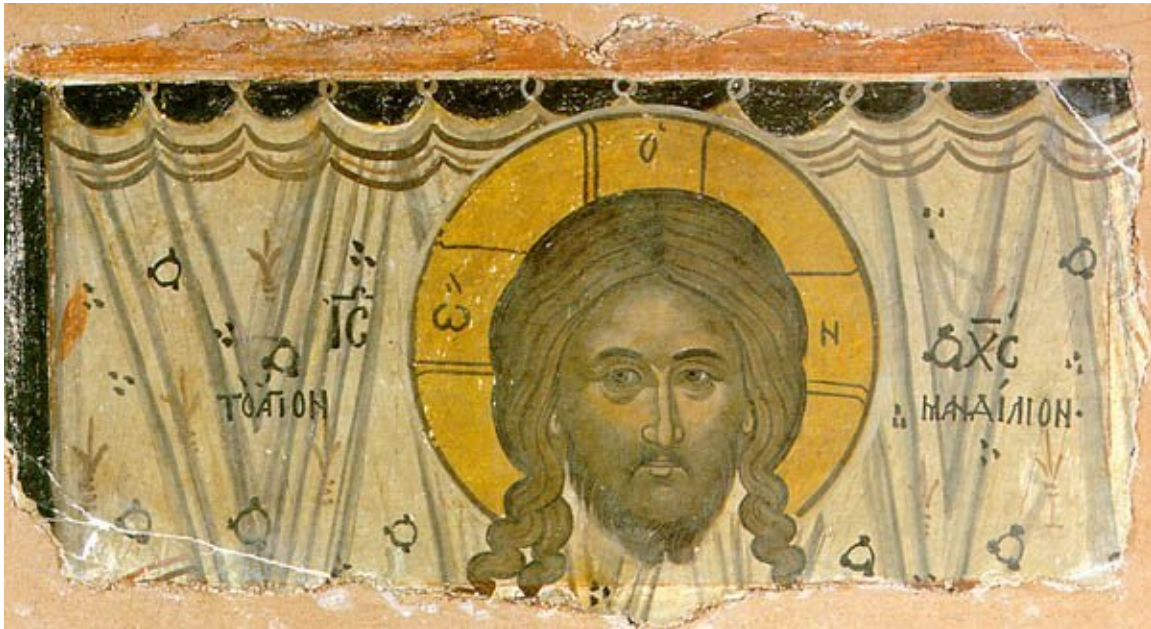


By the intercessions of the three hundred and  
Eighteen God bearing Fathers, O Christ God,  
Have mercy on us.  
Amen.

*In the First Hour, the following Matinal Sticheron:*

*Plagal of Second Tone*

**A**FTER Thy descent to Hades and Thy Resurrection from the dead, the disciples  
grieved as was fitting at Thy separation from them, O Christ, and they returned  
again to their occupations. Again the nets, again the ships, and no draught of fish  
whatsoever. But Thou didst appear to them, and as the Master of all things, Thou didst  
command them to cast their nets on the right side. And straightway Thy word became  
deed, and they caught a great multitude of fish and found a meal prepared for them on  
the shore. Grant that we too may now spiritually enjoy that which Thy disciples partook  
of then, O man-befriending Lord.



Ἀχειροποίητα  
**† THE ICON NOT MADE BY HANDS**

## **The Sunday of the Holy Fathers** ***From a Sermon by Archbishop Andrei in*** ***The One Thing Needful***

Today, we Orthodox Christians are still on the Mount of Olives. The after-Feast of the Ascension continues; but these are already the last days. In another two or three days we will have to descend the Mount of Olives. And today, Sunday, a question arises for us Orthodox Christians: to where? As if in answer to this question, the Holy Church at the same time opens the doors for us and says: The Tree of Life of Paradise is already restored—The Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ. For each of us the doors are open: come and see, take and receive, Here is that great dogma which was revealed by the Lord in the restoration of that great thing which was lost by Adam—the Tree of Life. “Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life; and I will raise Him up on the last day” (Jn. 6: 54). He who eats the Flesh and drinks the blood of Christ has life eternal, but...

Here the Holy Church defines this “but” for us. What is this “but”? The doors are open, the Eucharist is prepared. The Holy Church is prepared to receive each one of us in the Divine Liturgy. But for this, it is necessary for us to be prepared. What does this *preparation* consist of? This day, the day we call The Sunday of the Holy Fathers, gives us the answer. Here begins the establishment of rules which a Christian must follow in order to receive the New Testament Tree of Life—the Body and Blood of Christ—which will give *eternal life* to man.

And how does a person receive this great Mystery? The Holy Church answers us with this day. She presents the First Ecumenical Council which was held in Nicea in 325 A.D., at which the Holy Fathers gathered to destroy the heresy which is Arius’ innovation. What kind of heresy was it? Does it concern us? Not only does it concern us, brethren, but if *we do not fulfill the testaments of the Church, and if we do not understand the disturbance made by Arius, we will not be Orthodox Christians.*

What is this *but* of Arianism? The Apostle Paul, while walking around Athens, found a sacrificial altar To The Unknown God. And while preaching in the Aeropagus, as related in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 17: 16-34) he announced that the Unknown God is Christ. And the Athenians willingly accepted it; they began worshipping the true God in the same way the Apostle Paul preached to them. To worship God and recognize His greatness, this they could do. But to live according to God, they did not want to do. They did not want to live the way the Gospel required. First of all, there was a disturbance in their family life—they practiced polygamy. In public life, they were having a terrible political battle—slavery. A human being was not a human being in

relation to his Creator. Relations between people were terrible, based on slavery. And here this desire to live in a pagan way became so strong among the Athenians that it started to speak up even in the Church of Christ. And Arius became its leading advocate.

What did he say? When the Council that was gathered under Saint Constantine the Great began to expose Arius, Arius responded, “You Fathers say, *Christ is the Theanthropos (the God-Man)*. His Divinity and His Manhood are unchangeable and indivisible; one is in the other, so that it is impossible to tell what is in what. There is no separation between God and Man. Therefore, you make the conclusion that a Christian must always and everywhere be a Christian—in his family life and in his social life—always and everywhere a Christian is to be a Christian.”

“But I say”, said Arius, “that Christ is God *and* Man. His Divinity and His Manhood are divisible in Him. And this gives us the right also to separate our life: in regard to religion to be Christians, to worship Christ; but in our private and civic life to live the way we want, as we lived before, in a pagan way.”

To Arius’ response the Holy Fathers said to him, “Then you, Arius, and your followers cannot be Christians. You do not understand why the Son of God united Himself to our Manhood in the Virgin’s womb. God became man not only to reveal to us the true teaching about God, but also to live according to God. He came down from heaven to fulfill the commandment of *love for God and neighbor*; He requires fulfilment of this commandment from us.<sup>1</sup> Those who do not fulfill this commandment will remain pagans and will receive the same thing that pagans receive.”

This is how the Holy Fathers answered Arius. And this is what the Holy Church says to us even now. Look around us and you will see in action all these horrors and sights about which the Holy Fathers spoke: modern-day wars with their weapons of mass destruction, forgotten old age, and the madness which is now going in our society, and the young generation. Horrors!

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<sup>1</sup> And He answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself (Luke 10:27).

Saint Mark the Ascetic § 223: Every word of Christ shows us God’s mercy, justice and wisdom and, if we listen gladly, their power enters into us. That is why the unmerciful and the unjust, listening to Christ with repugnance, were not able to understand the Wisdom of God, but even crucified Him for teaching it. So we, too, should ask ourselves whether we listen to Him gladly. For He said: ‘He who loves Me will keep My commandments, and he will be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him’ (cf. Jn 14:21). Do you see how He has hidden His manifestation in the commandments? Of all the commandments, therefore, the most comprehensive is to love God and our neighbor. This love is made firm through abstaining from material things, and through stillness of thoughts .

In order to avoid these horrible things we have to be Orthodox Christians. And a Christian cannot be a Christian *and* a citizen. *Rather, in citizenship he must be a Christian*, which means always to be just a Christian. Only then will we be able to partake of Eternal Life with divine joy in Christ.



IN THEE, O FULL OF GRACE, ALL CREATION, BOTH THE  
COMPANY OF ANGELS AND THE RACE OF MEN, DOT  
REJOICE. O HALLOWED TEMPLE AND SPIRITUAL PARADISE,  
BOAST OF VIRGINS' FROM THEE GOD WAS INCARNATE  
AND BECAME A CHILD, HE, OUR GOD, WHO EXISTED  
BEFORE THE AGES; FOR HE MADE THY WOMB A THRONE,  
AND HE MADE THEE MORE SPACIOUS THAN THE  
HEAVENS. IN THEE, O FULL OF GRACE, ALL CREATION  
DOT REJOICE. GLORY BE TO THEE.